



National Interagency Fire Center
3838 S. Development Avenue
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National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

Preparedness Strategy 2007

Strategic Direction to Optimize Firefighting Capability

June, 2007

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THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

MAY 24 2007

Memorandum

To: Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, National Park Service
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service

From: Deputy Secretary *P. Lynn Scarlett*

Subject: Delegation of Authority to the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

The four Department of the Interior fire agencies—the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service—are nearing the time of year when the fire season traditionally becomes most active. As we prepare for this critical period, it is important that the Department of the Interior states clearly our vision of the vital role of the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC).

U.S. Forest Service Chief Gail Kimbell and I have outlined that role in the attached Delegation of Authority. We want to emphasize that NMAC has our full support to manage national resources and make decisions based on the overall needs of our Nation. We want to remind line managers, area administrators at the regional, State, and unit levels, as well as their employees, to comply with NMAC direction.

For many years, the function and perspective of NMAC has been critical to our success in wildland fire suppression. The national view and interests of Federal and State agencies are well-represented by the membership of the group. We recognize that management of resources within a geographical area remains the responsibility of Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordinating Groups and acknowledge that as an integral link in our wildfire response. But the ultimate national authority for moving people, aircraft, equipment, and other assets resides with NMAC.

As fire seasons tend to last longer and affect more regions of the country, NMAC's role takes on even more significance. All fire agencies are interdependent, and to a great degree, that is symbolized by the work of NMAC. We ask that you read through the attached Delegation to ensure a complete understanding of the responsibility and authority maintained within this group.

We thank you for your efforts. It is our hope that the 2007 season is recorded as one of the safest, most effective, and most efficient on record.

Attachment



File Code: 1230/5100

Date:

Subject: Delegation of Authority to the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs
and WO Staff

The Forest Service and the four fire agencies within the Department of the Interior (DOI) are nearing the time of year when the fire season traditionally becomes most active. As we prepare for this critical period, it is important that the Forest Service and the DOI clearly state their vision of the vital role of the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC).

The DOI Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett, and I have outlined that role in the enclosed Delegation of Authority to NMAC. We want to emphasize that NMAC has our full support to manage national resources and make decisions based on the overall needs of our Nation. We want to remind line officers and area administrators at the regional, forest and ranger district level, as well as their employees, they are required to comply with NMAC direction.

For many years, the function and perspective of NMAC has been critical to our success in wildland fire suppression. The national view and interests of federal and state agencies are well-represented by the membership of the group. We recognize management of resources within a geographical area remains the responsibility of NMAC, and acknowledge that as an integral link in our wildfire response. The ultimate national authority for moving people, aircraft, equipment and other assets resides with NMAC.

As fire seasons tend to last longer and affect more regions of the country, NMAC's role takes on even more significance. All fire agencies are interdependent and that to a great degree, is symbolized by the work of NMAC. Please read through the enclosed delegation to ensure complete understanding of the responsibility and authority maintained within this group.

We thank you for your efforts. It is our hope the 2007 season is recorded as one of the safest, most effective, and most efficient on record.


ABIGAIL R. KIMBELL
Chief

Enclosure

cc: Erin Newman, Regional Fire Directors



DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY
To the
National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

The National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) provides an essential management mechanism for national level strategic coordination to ensure that firefighting resources are efficiently and appropriately managed in a cost effective manner. The NMAC is responsible for establishing National and Geographic Area MAC business practices, ensuring timely national level incident information and firefighting resource status. The NMAC establishes national priorities among Geographic Areas, directing, allocating and reallocating firefighting resources among Geographic Areas to meet NMAC priorities. The NMAC also anticipates and identifies future firefighting resource requirements, and coordinates and resolves firefighting resource policy issues. The NMAC consists of representatives from the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), and the National Association of State Foresters (NASF).

The incumbents in the positions listed below constitute the membership of the NMAC and have the authority to manage wildland fire operations on behalf of the signatories to this delegation. Consistent with the responsibilities described above, the NMAC is the national level authority for directing and controlling firefighting resource allocations between Geographic Areas to ensure priority objectives are met, with full authority to take appropriate actions to implement their decisions.

NMAC membership:

- Chief, Division of Fire Operations, BLM
- Fire Director, NASF
- Assistant Director for Wildland Fire Operations, USFS
- Director, Branch of Fire Management, BIA
- Chief, Branch of Fire Management, FWS
- Wildland Fire Program Manager, USFA
- Chief, Division of Fire and Aviation, NPS

This authorization applies only to fire suppression resources including aircraft, equipment, Type 1 and 2 crews, Type 1 and 2 Incident Management Teams, NIMO teams, Area Command Teams, Fire Use Teams, smokejumpers, all military and international assets, overhead, and other national contract resources. This authorization specifically provides the authority to manage resource prioritization and allocation between geographical areas. Management of resources within a geographical area is the responsibility of Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordinating Groups.

To ensure operational capability in the event the primary member is unavailable, members of the NMAC may authorize an individual to act on their behalf with full authority as described above. Such delegation shall be documented in writing in advance, or as soon as practicable in the event of an emergency or other urgent situation, and shared with all primary members.

The NMAC will develop a national strategy annually with a focus on operational efficiency which will consider the political, social and environmental conditions existing for the upcoming year. The strategy's supporting documents will be updated as necessary to meet changing conditions. In addition to the national strategy, NMAC will also develop and maintain an Operations Plan.

This delegation of authority will remain in effect unless changed or revoked by further direction.



Deputy Secretary
Department of the Interior

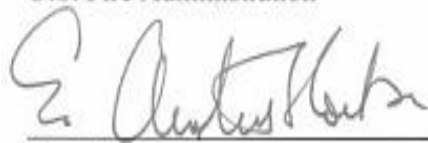
MAY 24 2007

Date: _____


Chief
U.S. Forest Service

Date: 6/1/2007

Administrator
U.S. Fire Administration



President
National Association of State Foresters

Date: _____

Date: 6/6/2007

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The National Preparedness Strategy was finalized in June 2007. The Preparedness Strategy will be updated as activity warrants. Updates will be numbered and dated as they are added to this document.

Introduction

The National Multi-Agency Coordination (NMAC) group consists of one representative from the following agencies: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Forest Service (FS), National Association of State Foresters (NASF), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency – United States Fire Administration (FEMA-USFA). These representatives have delegated authority by their respective agency directors to manage wildland fire operations and support to the National Response Plan on a national scale when competition for resources is probable. The delegated authorities include:

- Providing oversight of general business practices between the NMAC group and the Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordination (GMAC) groups.
- Establishing priorities among geographic areas.
- Directing, controlling, allocating and reallocating resources among or between Geographic Areas to meet national priorities.
- Implementing decisions of the NMAC.

The purpose of this strategy is to optimize capabilities as the tempo and severity of fire activity and support to the NRP escalate. Likely scenarios include:

- Multiple large wildland fires are burning in several geographic areas simultaneously.
- Demand for firefighting resources exceeds supply.
- Fires are burning in “long interval” fire regimes where the probability of meeting suppression objectives is low, and costs and resource commitments are high.
- Contingency resources (military, National Guard, foreign specialists) are engaged or may become engaged.
- Social/political interest is increasing.
- Fireline and command leadership are becoming limiting factors in operational responses.
- Resources are requested and/or committed to National Response Plan (NRP) Tasking.
- Suppression costs are likely to drain suppression budgets and lead to "fire borrowing."

Linked to this strategy is the Federal Fire and Aviation Direction for Leaders which defines operational expectations, reinforces performance, and clarifies existing policies and procedures. The Direction to Leaders paper also provides for consistent implementation of policy by Agency Administrators, Incident/Area Command Teams and fire and aviation management personnel. (Appendix 1).

The NMAC sets the National Preparedness Level (PL) to reflect the level of overall fire and/or all risk activity, and competition for resources. The National Preparedness Level

drives the appropriate actions necessary to respond to increasing severe situations (Appendix 2). The NMAC and Geographic Area MAC Groups (GMAC) will coordinate closely to assess the current situation and needs. These groups work with operational units such as incident management teams, local law enforcement, local fire service and State departments of emergency management to implement appropriate action (Appendix 3 provides a summary of the basic roles and responsibilities of these units).

The NMAC will issue direction based on:

- **Predictive Models:** Predictive Services units provide a general prognosis of expected fire weather, fuel conditions, and potential fire behavior including specific state-by-state evaluations that assist NMAC in anticipating critical fire situations.
- **Prioritization Criteria:** These criteria are developed by the NMAC to guide decision-making in setting national priorities for allocating critical resources to Geographic Areas with wildland fire activity or other emergencies.
- **Strategic Decision Points:** Strategic decision points will be established to emphasize critical needs and concerns. They will be based on time of year, overall level of activity, both current and predicted, overall level of resource commitment, both current and predicted, and drawdown levels established for critical resources.

National Priorities

The primary responsibility of the wildland fire agencies is the coordinated, interagency response to wildland fire across the nation. When competition for the use of wildland fire resources occurs among Geographic Areas, the NMAC will establish national priorities. When competition for wildland fire resources occurs between wildland fire and non-wildland fire incidents, the NMAC will recommend priorities to national leadership in Washington, DC for the appropriate allocation of those resources.

The single, overriding priority in all actions is the protection of human life – both that of firefighters and the public.

In setting national priorities and developing drawdown plans, the NMAC will consider these criteria.

- Maintain Geographic Area initial attack capability.
- Protect communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources.
- Limit costs without compromising safety.
- Meet local agency objectives.
- Support to National Response Plan (NRP) taskings.

National Strategy

The outlook for the 2007 fire season indicates above normal fire potential over much of the Southeast, eastern Washington and Oregon, and portions of the Southwest, Great Basin, California, Wyoming, and Montana. Below normal fire potential is projected for eastern New Mexico into Texas. By closely monitoring projected fire weather, fuel conditions and fire activity, NMAC will safely and effectively manage resources to meet national priorities (Appendix 4).

The national outlook is located at:

<http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/outlooks/outlooks.htm>

Risk management involves accurate hazard identification, managing current risk and anticipating potential risks associated with response capability. The NMAC emphasizes an ongoing re-examination of factors geared toward limiting exposure to hazardous situations, monitoring people and equipment for fatigue, and using our best skills on high priority incidents. Particular focus is required on fires where command is being transferred from one management level to another.

NMAC provides an essential management mechanism for national level strategic coordination to ensure that firefighting resources are efficiently and appropriately managed in a cost effective manner. The NMAC is responsible for establishing National and Geographic Area MAC business practices, ensuring timely national level incident information and firefighting resource status, setting national priorities among Geographic Areas, directing, allocating and reallocating firefighting resources among Geographic Areas to meet NMAC priorities, anticipating and identifying future firefighting resource requirements, and coordinating and resolving firefighting resource policy issues.

NMAC is the national level authority for directing and controlling firefighting resource allocations between Geographic Areas to ensure priority objectives are met, with full authority to take appropriate actions to implement their decisions.

This authorization applies only to fire suppression resources including aircraft, equipment, Type 1 and 2 crews, Type 1 and 2 Incident Management Teams, NIMO teams, Area Command Teams, Fire Use Teams, smokejumpers, all military and international assets, overhead, and other national contract resources. This authorization specifically provides the authority to manage resource prioritization and allocation between Geographic Areas. Management of resources within a Geographical Area is the responsibility of Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordinating Groups (GMACs).

The primary responsibility of the wildland fire agencies is response to wildland fire. In accordance with the National Response Plan, wildland fire agencies may receive requests for resources for non- fire incidents. In general, resources necessary to respond to wildland fire will receive first priority. When competition for wildland fire resources occurs between wildland fire and non-wildland fire incidents, the NMAC will recommend priorities for the appropriate allocation of those resources.

Agency Administrators, with advice from the NMAC and GMAC will evaluate and balance the competing requirements for wildland fire resources for NRP and fire management incidents. NMAC will recommend a course of action to the Fire Executive Council (FEC) who may also choose to coordinate with the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture.

- All firefighting efforts and strategies are coordinated with states, tribes, local governments and other key entities.
- Agency Administrators and fire program managers will continuously evaluate restrictions on the use of various types of suppression resources and tactics on lands they manage as outlined in land use management plans.
- GMACs must develop “geographic strategies,” based on the current and anticipated fire situation. These strategies focus on the entire scope of the wildland fire situation within the Geographic Area rather than individual fires.
- GMAC projections must include potential to impact population centers, contingency plans and their associated decision points, critical resources required to mitigate the threat and plans for managing the drawdown of resources.
- Appropriate management response is the response to a wildland fire that most effectively, efficiently, and safely meets objectives identified in the approved fire management plan. The response may range across a spectrum of tactical operations, from monitoring to intensive management actions. Opportunities to implement this approach should be pursued.
- Suppression strategies and tactics must be based on what the fire will allow us to do, not what we want to do. Allocating significant scarce resources to projected long-duration fires or those that have minimal probability of early containment should not be considered unless there is a direct threat to a community.
- Interagency prevention and education programs are encouraged and supported to reduce unwanted ignitions.
- Resource allocation is based on priorities and the achievement of specific objectives and not simply on a first come, first served basis.
- It is imperative that a ready mobile reserve force be on hand and positioned according to weather forecasts and other intelligence. The reserve, consisting of critical resources for responding to national priorities, will be maintained as necessary (Appendix 6).

- Emphasis will be placed on maintaining proficient and highly qualified agency and agency cooperator resources. Mobilization priorities will be adjusted as appropriate to ensure that experience goals and objectives are attained.
- The Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Department of Agriculture have adopted the Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide, referred to as the IFPM Standard. NWCG PMS 310-1 qualifications are a key component of this standard. Meeting the IFPM standards will require a greater need for coordinated and prioritized training assignments than in previous years. Management at all levels of the fire organization must assess the training and development needs of employees. Strategic training plans and priorities must be developed and implemented to ensure employees' training and developmental assignments are met. Partners at all levels are encouraged to proactively address this need in the interagency environment.
- Management of aviation resources will become increasingly centralized. Initial action is the primary mission for all tactical aviation assets. Information from Predictive Services and the Geographic Areas will be used to anticipate fire danger and fire occurrence probability. Resources will be prepositioned to respond to these threats. Assignments will be validated daily and aircraft will be reallocated as necessary (Appendix 7).
- It is important that GMACs recognize the credible threat that domestic as well as international terrorists pose for intentionally ignited wildfires.

Actions

These actions are necessary to implement the national strategy.

- NMAC will coordinate with the GMACs for setting priorities and placement of critical or short supply resources including Area Commands and Incident Management Teams (IMTs). Centralized management and control of critical resources may be implemented.

NMAC will coordinate with the GMACs to balance competing demands between Geographic Areas, and wildland fire and all-hazard incidents.

Two National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) teams will be deployed according to procedures in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide. NMAC will assess their value in addressing our wildland fire and all-hazard workload. Areas should identify assignment opportunities for NIMO as they implement the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis.

- High priority tactical assignments are appropriate even if a resource is available for less than the usual 14-day rotation. For example, if a Type 1 crew is available only for five days but could make a significant contribution on a fire during that time, the crew should be assigned to the incident. Resources should be used most effectively keeping in mind national priorities. National shared resources will be managed to maximize their availability and flexibility for all assignments including all-hazard assignments. Manage fatigue in achieving this objective.
- Innovative and creative ways of managing people and resources must be shared among Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACCs). When a strategy works well in one area, other areas need to know about it. The National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) will consolidate and distribute these successful strategies as appropriate.
- For national mobilization, teams will configure to the national standard as described in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide. Teams ordered will be filled in the long or short configuration as requested.
- Additional short teams may be organized to manage incidents.
- Geographic Areas will develop Type 3 organizations to meet projected Geographic Area needs.
- The primary mission and priority of the Interagency of Fire Use Management Teams (FUMT) is to provide land managers with skilled and mobile personnel to assist with the management of Wildland Fire Use (WFU) and prescribed fires.

Each FUMT offers the full range of appropriate management response to wildland fire occurrence and large complex prescribed fire applications

- It is important to monitor the effects of both short-term and cumulative fatigue. It is critical that fire personnel receive adequate rest and that supervisors watch for signs of fatigue and act to mitigate it.
- Attention should be given to balance assignment opportunities for tactical resources and IMTs on a national basis.
- NMAC will consider alternatives to maximize the effectiveness of resources. Concepts such as branching an incident should be evaluated as an alternative to assigning additional IMTs and Buying Teams.
- NMAC will effectively share information with Federal and State elected officials, media, Agency Administrators, and the fire management community.

NMAC / GMAC Coordination

The NMAC, GMACs, and Agency Administrators will coordinate and cooperate to provide resources for national deployment by considering innovative management strategies for allocation and re-allocation of scarce resources.

The NMAC will initiate conference calls with GMACs as the situation warrants.

The NMAC requires information from the GMACs to prioritize and allocate resources in accordance with the national strategy. GMACs will provide a description of their decision processes in setting priorities and an assessment of the current and projected situation including an analysis of whether conditions should improve or deteriorate over the next seven days. A complete description of the threat risk that specific incidents may pose to communities or critical infrastructure is paramount.

When situations warrant, NMAC will require justification and information for assignment of Type 1 IMTs and Area Command Teams (Appendix 8).

Once an Area Command Team is assigned to a Geographic Area, the GMAC is responsible for providing management oversight in coordination with the agency administrator.

At National Preparedness Levels 4 and 5, GMACs will list specific resources required to accomplish priority incident objectives and describe whether those needs can be met from within the Geographic Area. (Appendix 9 and 10).

Updates are to be provided as the situation warrants.